

Charles Doherty, Linda Doran & Mary Kelly (eds.) *Glendalough: City of God*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011. 383 pages. ISBN 978-1-84682-170-7. Price: 45€.

This impressive collection of essays is the first extensive study of the monastic site at Glendalough which discusses not only the archaeological remains but also explores the literary and pictorial materials relating to the site covering its history from its foundation in the early Middle Ages up to the 19th century. The overarching theme of the book is to treat Glendalough as a 'city of God', 'a holy site' and to explore the manifestations of its holiness in archaeology, politics, literature and learning. The impetus for the book came from a one-day seminar on Glendalough organised by the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland in 2008.

The first three articles of the book deal with the space and organisation of the site as a holy place. The opening article by Melanie C. Maddox explores the idea of monastery as a *civitas* or a city of refuge and the division of the monastic space into consecutive areas of progressive holiness applying these notions into the Lives of St Kevin, the founder of the monastery. Colmán Etchingham gives in his article a very succinct analysis of the nature of early Irish Church and the place of Glendalough in it. His discussion centres around the question of whether Glendalough should be called a monastery in the first place and what does it entail in the light of recent developments of

our understanding of the organisation of early Irish Church. Jean-Michel Picard's contribution does not touch upon Glendalough at all but discusses in a more general way the organisation of the holy space addressing more specifically the problem of the *platea*, the open space between the monastic buildings.

The second part of the book deals with the material remains of Glendalough opening with Tomás Ó Carragáin's article on the so-called St Kevin's house and its uses. Ó Carragáin thus continues the discussion of the ordering and use of the holy space but turning from the literary depictions to the archaeological evidence. The discussion of the material evidence continues in the article of Raghnaill Ó Floinn which is the first extensive survey of the so-called 'market cross' at Glendalough. By setting the erection of the cross into a wider ecclesiastical and political context, he is able to refute the theory that it ever was a market cross and to present a more plausible hypothesis of its origins. Lorcan Harney's contribution continues on the theme of stone crosses offering an extensive survey of the stone sculptures found in Glendalough and asking what their locations may tell of the burials and the practice of pilgrimage.

The third set of articles focuses on hagiography. Pádraig Ó Riain discusses the methodological problems of dating the Lives of St Kevin attempting to establish a likely date for the composition of the 'original' Life. Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel's article offers the valuable contribution of drawing attention to the versions of the Life of St Kevin found in Continental

collections and, moreover, presents an edition of the oldest surviving manuscript version of the *Life* with translation. Brian Lacey applies hagiographical evidence in a historical study focusing on the monster episode found in three of the four surviving *Lives* of St Kevin in order to find out what it can tell of the historical context of the move from the upper to the lower lake in Glendalough. The hagiographical discussion is interrupted by Martina Pozdechova's almost poetic introduction to her gorgeous photographs of Glendalough at different times of the year. These images illustrate beautifully the lasting allure of the monastic ruins and the surrounding scenery. The images are followed by the last article on saints by Diarmuid Ó Riain, who continues with the continental connections of Glendalough. He explores the possibility of the existence of St Kevin's cult in Würzburg in the late eleventh century and the case of the Irish bishop Gilla na Náem who is recorded to have died in 1085.

The next two articles focus on the question of power and on the dynastic involvement of Glendalough. Ailbhe MacShamhráin's contribution continues on hagiography considering the historical evidence for the dynastic connections of Glendalough found in the Latin *Life* of St Kevin which may help in dating the text. MacShamhráin's contribution includes also an interesting look into the composition and redaction of Latin *Lives* of Irish saints in the thirteenth century. Colmán Etchingham's second contribution to this book deals with the impact of the Viking attacks on

Glendalough refuting some earlier views according to which they caused considerable disruptions to the life at the monastery.

The following section of the book includes three articles discussing the tradition of learning in Glendalough. Daniel P. Mc Carthy's article focuses on one of the central aspects of early medieval Irish monastic learning i.e. the paschal computus. Mc Carthy discusses the sophisticated mathematical learning of Irish monks on a more general level referring to Glendalough only briefly towards the end of the article. Sara G. Casey explores another seminal aspect of monastic life, i.e. liturgy, tying it more closely with the overall topic of the book. Charles Doherty continues on the theme of scholarship focusing on the transmission of learning between Glendalough, Wales and the Continent giving a detailed look into the evidence pertaining to the movement of scholars and books between these places.

The last part of the book returns to the material remains at Glendalough, but focusing more on their later use and representations. Rachel Moss discusses the architectural sculptures at Glendalough focusing especially on twelfth-century building activity and the later reuse of the building materials and alterations made to the buildings. She addresses the practical reasons for the reuse of the existing building materials and notes how building activity reflects renewed interest in promoting St Kevin's cult and pilgrimage to the site in the twelfth century. The reasons for grouping

of this article here instead of the section dealing with the material remains is not quite clear since the last three items in the book focus on much later, mainly eighteenth- and nineteenth-century, representations of Glendalough. In the first of these, Peter Harbison surveys antiquarian interest towards Glendalough providing a detailed look into early modern illustrations of Glendalough and examining the information that may be gleaned in them. While Harbison studies the pictorial illustrations of Glendalough, the next contribution by Máirín Ní Cheallaigh looks at verbal images of the monastic site. Her article provides an interesting look into the ways in which nineteenth-century tourists engaged with the landscape and scenery of Glendalough. Aileen M. Ireland's article on the contribution of the Royal Society of Irish Antiquaries to the preservation of Glendalough forms a fitting ending for the book.

All in all, this extensive collection of articles demonstrates admirably the plurality of approaches which can be applied to the study of holy places. The book's focus on one specific site, Glendalough, guarantees that there is some coherence to the collection as a whole, although in some of the articles the link seemed to be quite superficial. Despite the tight thematic focus of the book, most of the authors are able to address wider issues concerning medieval and early modern Irish economy, politics and learning with the help of evidence pertaining specifically to Glendalough. The ample illustration of the book is

beautifully reproduced, and especially Ms. Pozdechova's evocative photographs and the early modern drawings of the site printed as part of Harbison's contribution complement the scholarly articles by giving a real feeling of the beauty of the place.

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Meid, Wolfgang: *The Celts*. Innsbrück: Innsbrücker Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft, 2010. 182 pages. ISBN 978-3-85124-228-7. Price: 24€.

New introductions to the Celts for general audience are published almost every year. Most of them are written by authors, who have a keen interest in everything Celtic, but are not themselves professional scholars. The scholarly works are most often produced by archaeologists, which is understandable, as most of the evidence—especially on the Continent—for the Celtic cultures comes from archaeological artefacts. This is why it is refreshing to read this new introduction on the Celts by the distinguished linguist Wolfgang Meid.

The book is intended for a general audience, so a knowledgeable reader finds little that is new or controversial in the book. Meid starts with issues dealing with identity and languages. He then goes